

Date of sermon: 8/15/2021
Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke
Bible passage or verse: Psalm 1
Title of Sermon: Word, Not the World
Series: Deep Roots - #1

1 Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, **2** but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. **3** That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers. **4** Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. **5** Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. **6** For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

So, if you were to come to my garden, I would introduce you to Humpty Dumpty. Who is Humpty Dumpty? My pumpkin -- I've named it Humpty Dumpty. Not that I intend to roll it off of a wall, but it's huge! Now, it's not going to be huge enough during fair time that I would enter it, but I'll guarantee you, I'm going to need a tractor to lift this bad boy. And I nurture it and feed it -- the same stuff that Doretta¹ drinks. Because -- I've never grown a huge pumpkin, and I don't know anything about growing huge pumpkins, but I figure everything that I have on my property -- a lot of horse manure -- I just kind of give it all that it needs. And it is going to be huge. That's one of the reasons I love fairs. I love fairs, and I hope we can continue these things, because at fairs, you have people that enter, you know, all kinds of things, from sheep to goats, cattle and pies -- and more than just a few times -- because when I was younger, I actually was the manager of the outside property of a fair -- I would ask people that won, "So, what's your secret?" And I'll guarantee you, they never told me. Man, if you're winning year after year after year -- and when I was there at the fair, I noticed -- there were certain ladies who always won in the divisions that they entered. They always won! It wasn't even a contest! And I would ask them, "What's your secret?" and they were like, "I can't tell you!" If you go to these barbecue kinda cookoffs and everything else -- the same thing. I guarantee you, the people, unless -- well, even then, when they, you know, manufacture it -- they don't tell you the secret! Why? Because if you know the secret, then you don't need them! The secret is one of those things that puts together all of the things of soil and seed and growth and produces something on the other side called what? A winner.

A number of years ago Stephen Covey wrote a book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. And what he noticed is that there's a secret. He made it not a secret -- he put it into publication and made millions. They're just simple things, to be quite honest with you. Covey, not a believer, actually discovered his secrets where? From the Bible. The Book of Proverbs happened to be the source of his text. He noticed certain things that enabled people to be a success, like -- if you're a self-starter, you're probably going to be successful. Like -- if you're goal-oriented. If you have no goals, you'll reach them. If you have goals, you're probably going to reach many of them. He noticed that if you have a sense of priority in your life, it's probably going to lead you in a positive way. Another one of his seven habits was: successful people often build mutual relationships that are beneficial. He goes on. There is a secret, if you will, to success. "Deep Roots" is the title of this series, and it's about living a life of prosperity. Now, you hear that and you think, "Oh, my gracious, our pastor's gone off the rocker." No no no no. Let me read the text. And this is our first one for today. I know a lot of you probably didn't bring your Bibles, but if you have a phone, you have a Bible. I'm in the Book of Psalms, and I'm going to read number 1, and it's going to be the first in this series called "Deep Roots." "Blessed is the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He's gonna be like a tree planted" -- or actually, the word is "transplanted." It's an interesting observation that the writer is telling you that this person, to gain success, *prosperity* as you will see the word in a minute, has decided to transplant himself from one environment to another. "He's like a tree that was transplanted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither-- whatever he does he prospers. Not so the

¹ Refers to Doretta Brown, an older woman at the church who must be doing something right to have lived for over 98 years!

wicked, the people of the world! They're rather like chaff that blow away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked, they will ultimately perish."

I want to talk about, for a couple of weeks, "Deep Roots." What are deep roots? They are things in your life which enable you in this text to stand. If you were to come to my house and look in the front yard, I have three oaks. Tree experts in our church have told me that they're somewhere in the vicinity of 250 years old. Now, if you go back 250 years, I don't know very many of them, but I know of the Columbus Day storm in 1962. I know of the freeze in 2021. And I know that at night at my place, the wind whips over the hill, and I have gale-force breezes all the way through the summer. So, in 250 years, these trees have endured a lot. And they are strong. They're amazing. Those trees are so strong that some of the limbs coming out of them are hundreds and hundreds of pounds. Single limbs. And they stand. See, the writer understands that the life you're going to live is going to be COVID over and over and over and over. Really is. It's gonna be storm after storm after storm. In fact, Jesus was the one who said, "In this world you are going to have various trials." You should never as a Christian expect an easy life. God never promised it. In fact, He promised the opposite of it. What I find for me, at times, and a lot of Christians, is they get annoyed when things get difficult, and frankly a little disappointed in God, when God is really saying, "Hey -- I told you! I'm not gonna give you an easy life. I want to make you a strong person." And what makes the trees in my front yard strong are deep roots. What makes the pumpkin I'm growing huge is good root system. What makes a person successful, Covey says, is certain roots or values of which they practice.

So, today we want to begin the series in Psalm 1. What does David tell us? Well, he said, number one is that you need to choose carefully who you're gonna partner with, or who you're gonna listen to. It's really beyond listening. It's actually what I would consider a partnership. And he begins, and he classifies it in three ways. He says, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers." What is he telling us? Number one, in this being careful of who you partner with, is he says that you have to be careful that you don't listen or you don't incline your ear to the crowd. Now, he uses the term "wicked". The problem with wicked for most of you is, you go to the darkest, most evil individual in the world and everyone else is okay. That's not what David is talking about. He's talking about unrighteous. That means anyone who is not in Christ, anyone who is not walking with Christ, anyone's whose value system does not come from Christ is an enemy of God and therefore by definition wicked. I'm not trying to say that they're despicable people -- I'm just saying that they're unrighteous. They're not walking in the counsel of God. They don't have a surrendered heart. The Scripture is not their authority in life, and David says that you don't walk, you don't incline yourself to those individuals. Why? Because they have a criteria that you don't accept. You see, the crowd, the wicked, have a criteria that you, I guarantee you, you don't live by.

What is their criteria? Number one, do whatever you feel like doing. If you feel like doing it, do it. If you feel like you're a different gender, change it. If you feel like something, whatever the case may be, the greatest authority in your life is you. And whatever you want to do, whatever you feel like doing -- and they will put this little caveat or this little misnomer on it, or this little qualification, that as long as you don't hurt somebody else -- the idea that you can live your life and make any decision and not affect other people is insanity. So, the reality is, he says, I don't want you to walk in the counsel of people whose criteria, number one, is do whatever you feel like. Secondly, the criteria of the world is now. Focus on now, not the future. Doesn't matter what happens in the future. I want it NOW. I want relief NOW. I want money NOW. I want a better life NOW. And if you look all the way through the Scripture, one of the things that you're gonna notice is that God has this incredible value system for people of faith who look to the future. That's the whole basis of Hebrews chapter 11. The only people who get into Hebrews chapter 11 are individuals who forwent, who gave up, the demand of something now in what? The hopes that God would deliver something in the future.

The world has a different criteria than you. They say do what you feel like. Secondly, focus on now. And, they also say that life is what you have, not what you give. They never say in the show, "We wanna show you the lifestyle of the humble and generous." They say, "We wanna show you the lifestyle of the rich and famous." Why? Because the humble and generous is a yawn. No one wants to watch it. The world

doesn't value that. The world values the lifestyle of the rich and famous. The lifestyle of people who have a lot. And you say, "Well, I don't have a lot." But the reality is, our whole culture is built upon that yearning, if you will, of the great acquisition. That's what sells the lottery. No one buys the lottery because they want to go and bankrupt themselves. They do the lottery because they want to have a lot of money. That's the criteria of the world. If I have more money, my life will be better. Criteria is do what you feel like doing, focus on the now, life is what you have, not what you give, and people are to be used for you. And that's why David said -- don't listen to the crowd's counsel. If you incline your ear to People magazine, you're gonna be walking counter to God's heart. If you derive your value system from People magazine, if you value Enquirer and take the information out of that and try to place that into your heart and into your life, then David says you're gonna be walking in the counsel of wickedness.

Secondly, in this be careful who you partner with, he says, don't take the crowd's path. It's a stand in the way of sinners. Meaning, to come alongside them and stand in their path. It's moving now from listening to them to acting like them. It's now from taking counsel to acting like them. My mom used to tell me when I was a kid, "Birds of a feather flock together. I can tell you who you are in your heart just by your friends." I didn't like that at the time, because some of my friends were kinda jerks. And I always wanted to defend this, "Oh, mom, you know, I don't think like them," and she was right, birds of a feather flock together. The bottom line is -- the value system of a group of people is probably what your value system is. If they become individuals that you walk with, if they become individuals that you party with, if they become individuals that you vacation with, then you're gonna be thinking and acting just like them. And he is telling us that if you want to prosper, and you wanna stand when a storm comes, then make sure you're not walking in the path of people whose value system is do what you feel like, focus on now, life is not what you give, it's what you have, and people are to be used for you. What is the path of the crowd? I think it's the path of water. Go find water draining anywhere and you will discover that water always takes what? The path of least resistance. That's a person of no character. That's the way of the world. They take the path of least resistance. They take the path of the crowd. Why is it easy to walk the path of the crowd? Because it's well-trampled. The path of the crowd is well-worn. People have walked there before, so it's easy to go there. Don't take that path. What path does Jesus encourage you to take? Well, he tells you. If you want to be great, prosperous, successful in the Kingdom of God -- don't go home early today; stay late, be a servant, clean up. You want to be great? When everyone lines up for food, make sure you're last. Now, I know today we're gonna see the biggest fight in the world. People are, "Oh no, please, go before me. Please go before me. Because I'd like to be great." The reality is, let's get off of Sunday. Let's go to the fair. Let's go somewhere else. Let's go in life -- wherever you wanna go. Let's go to work. Let's go in your neighborhood. Jesus says, what is the path of the crowd? I would like to be first, I would like you to meet my needs, and I -- if you can meet my neighbor, that's fine, but as long as I get it first. Christ says, "No, if you wanna be great in the kingdom of God, be last. If you want to be something special, be a servant. And if you want to be really super, learn to defer your needs for another day and live by faith today." Don't take the crowd's path.

And finally, choose carefully who you partner with. He exhorts you, don't take on the mindset of the crowd. He says, "I don't want you to sit in the seat of mockers." What is a mocker? A mocker is a person who makes fun of others, who tears down but does not offer to build up. My best definition for a mocker is to turn on the radio and listen to talk-show hosts. They're predominantly mockers. What do I mean? They produce nothing. They really don't. They will tell you they're giving insight into cultural things, but their primary approach in life is what? To tear down, to find fault, to find somebody who's messed up. Somebody who they think is stupid. You want to find a mocker? Listen to Sports Talk on Monday. A group of individuals, man, who can't run a mile but they will tell you everything and how pathetic Tom Brady is. It's a mocker! It's a person who makes fun of other people, who discredits them, who tears them down. That's what David says -- don't be that. Be careful who you partner with. Be careful what you're listening to on the radio, seriously. Be careful how much time you put the voice of a mocker into your heart. Why? Because if you continue to listen to them, you'll start thinking like them. Choose carefully who you partner with. And then, secondly, he says choose carefully what you allow to consume your mind. "But his delight" -- verse 2 -- "is in the law of the Lord. And on his law he meditates day and night."

I remember reading one time that C.S. Lewis didn't like Psalm 1. I was always kind of interested in C.S. Lewis, and so, when he says he doesn't like something, it's like -- "Huh, that's interesting." He didn't like it, because, he goes, "Who delights in the law? I mean, that's just -- it's bad. You don't delight in the law, you obey the law. You delight in mercy, you delight in ice cream, you delight in pie. But you don't delight in the law -- you respect the law." I mean, do you delight in the laws that we have in our country? Do you look at the laws? Do you just look at them and go, "Oh, I just delight in them" like you delight in pie? This is what C.S. Lewis said. He goes, "It doesn't make sense unless David helps you see the benefits of the law." "Delight yourself in the law of the Lord, and on his law meditate day and night." And you could almost put, "and when you do -- and when you do, you will be like a tree planted by streams of water." Be careful who you partner with. And be very careful what you allow to consume the thinking of your mind. Delight yourself in the law. How do I do that? Number one, discover its benefits. Discover all the benefits of the law and all the things that God says in this text, that if you read it, you're gonna discover. What does he tell you? You're gonna be prosperous. What does he tell you? You're gonna be steadfast. What does he tell you? You're gonna flourish. What does he tell you? You're gonna be bountiful in fruit. The person who learns to delight in God's law is not just a person who has a high-end discipline. It's not a person who's a morning person, who loves the morning and adores time in the Word of God and a good cup of coffee. That will benefit you. But when it comes down to it, I think the person who endures in the Word is the person who is delighted -- he's learned to understand that there's gold in these hills. Then you begin to look at the Scriptures, you begin to see how they preserve your life, how they guide your life, how when you soak them in, they give you a wisdom to live. How, when you begin to read through them, they instruct you as a parent, they instruct you as a husband, they instruct you as a business owner, and the next thing you know, you begin to see, and you begin to make decisions, and people will come to you and say, man, that was really a wise decision. And you realize, where did I get that? I got it from God's word.

See, what David is telling us is that, the person who prospers is the person who discovers all of the benefits. And yes, wonderfully so, I think one of the great benefits of the Word of God is the ability to be honest with you like nobody else can. The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, pierces through the division of soul and marrow. It judges the thoughts and the intentions. And sometimes when you're at work, or sometimes when you're at home, sometimes maybe when you come to church, you'll respond to a person and you'll say something -- and you realize when you go home and you open the Word of God and the Holy Spirit starts to work with the Word of God, the next thing you know you're feeling this kind of -- not dread, but conviction that comes over your heart. And you realize, "I need to make a phone call. I need to go back to somebody at work. I need to humble myself to my wife." See, the Word of God gives you wisdom to live, discernment, but it also gives you judgment of your heart and your soul. And that's a huge benefit. Because I can't imagine how many relationships have been strengthened, how many marriages have endured because somebody in that relationship submitted themselves and learned to delight in God's Word, and because of that, they became a completely different spouse.

David goes on to say, "I want you to discover the practice and the benefit of meditation." He says, "And on this law he meditates day and night." One time Annie and I -- we were venturing out in our exercise program, and we took a class. I won't name the class, because I don't want to malign the individual or the corporation. But we took this class, and -- it was a combination of yoga, stretching, and something else. And we were in the back of the room for a variety of reasons -- number one, we'd never taken the class before, and I kind of wanted to work with Annie, and we were together, and I could discern really quickly I had no idea what I was doing, so I just leaned over to Annie, and I said to her, "Honey, do whatever that lady does." So, Annie's just watching her. And Annie is one of the most nimble, flexible individuals in the world. And this lady overheard me say that, and so, Annie was doing what that lady was doing, and when the hour came due and we were finished -- and that means we were really finished; at least, I was -- the lady came back, and she looked at Annie. She goes, "Honey, you did a whole lot better than your father." I was listening to the instructor, and not to pick a fight at all, but she was describing meditation in this way -- "I want you to empty your minds, just get rid of everything, and I want you to meditate on just opening your mind to whatever might come into it." And I realized -- no wonder why a lot of people are leery of various exercise issues, because they define meditation really in a very unbiblical way. Meditation is not opening your mind and cleaning it out and clearing it out. That's

not meditation. I don't know what the definition of what I just described is, but that's not the biblical definition of meditation. Look at this text again. He says, "I want you to meditate day and night" on what? "The law."

See, meditation is not -- biblically speaking, it's not emptying your mind. It's actually filling your mind. Meditation is not wiping the slate clean, it's actually filling the slate -- with what? The law of God. It's filling your mind. It's not disconnection, it's rather a connection. It's calling to mind. It's thinking things over. It's dwelling on it. It's applying it. It's embracing. It's owning. Might I suggest that, you know, it's probably not gonna work for you if you need your devotion to be about a minute and a half to two minutes a day. If your time allotment for God is three minutes, then your poem will be -- "Give me three minutes' worth of God -- not enough to make me love a person, just enough to save me from hell. Give me three, you know, seconds of God." If your time allotment is, "I only have three minutes for my devotion," you're not gonna be able to meditate. You simply can't. Because to mediate is to do what? It's to call to mind. It's to think over. It's to dwell on. It's to apply. It's to embrace. And it's to own. It's a moment where you come into communion with the Holy Spirit, and the next thing you know, the Holy Spirit is speaking to you, using the Word of God, that which you've memorized, that which you've read over, that which you've pondered. And David says, "My friends, that is the secret." Don't partner with people who have a different value system than God. And don't think for a moment that you and I can ever look like Jesus on three minutes a day. I must learn to delight in the Word of God. I understand its benefits. And I must -- I must be willing to call to mind, to mull over, to ponder. To meditate.

How do you succeed in this next year -- this next year of school starting and the tensions? How do you succeed and not be filled with rage and anger? How do you succeed and not give way to anxiety and fear? Drill deep roots. Make a choice. In our family, we're gonna be very careful as to who we allow to be the counsel in our ears. And we're gonna be very disciplined to raise up the benefits of God's Word and to commit to the meditation of God's word. And when you do -- when you do, you will be like a tree planted by streams of water, and you will yield fruit this season, and your life will not wither, and whatever -- whatever you put your mind to this year, you will prosper. How? By being a person of the Word, not the world. By being a person of the Word, not the world. When you choose to do that this next year, I don't care what happens -- you will prosper. You will succeed. That's what God longs for you. And you get there by choosing to be a person of the Word, not the world.

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